

Primer: Asian History in Canada

CREATION OF ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH IN CANADA

- Asian Heritage Month has been celebrated in May in the US since the 1970s.
- Following a motion by [Senator Vivienne Poy](#), the first Asian-Canadian appointed to the Senate, May was officially celebrated as [Asian Heritage Month](#) in Canada in 2002.

SELECT KEY MOMENTS

- ◆ **1874:** Chinese are denied the right to vote in Canada.
- ◆ **1880–85:** 15,000 Chinese workers complete the British Columbia section of the [Canadian Pacific Railway](#), with more than 600 dying because of dangerous conditions.
- ◆ **1885–1923:** A [head tax](#) is placed on Chinese immigrants to Canada in an attempt to restrict immigration.
- ◆ **1907:** British Columbia passes a bill denying South Asians the right to vote. Anti-Asian riots take place in Vancouver.
- ◆ **1914:** The [Komagata Maru](#) arrives in Vancouver with Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus on board. Over 350 passengers are not allowed to enter Canada, and the ship is forced to return to India.
- ◆ **1920:** The Dominion Elections Act excludes from the federal vote all groups already denied the vote provincially on the basis of race. This includes Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian Canadians.
- ◆ **1923–47:** With the *Chinese Immigration Act of 1923*, Chinese immigration to Canada is restricted almost entirely.
- ◆ **1942:** Shortly after Japan enters the Second World War, 20,881 men, women and children of Japanese ancestry are removed from their homes on the West Coast and held in [internment](#) camps. Their property is confiscated and sold by the government.
- ◆ **1947:** The Chinese head tax is repealed and [Chinese Canadians](#) are given the right to vote.
- ◆ **1948-9:** [Japanese Canadians](#) are given the right to vote and regain freedom of movement.
- ◆ **1988:** The Government of Canada formally apologizes to Japanese Canadians and offers financial compensation for their internment during the Second World War.
- ◆ **2006:** Official apology in the House of Commons by Prime Minister Stephen Harper for the Chinese head tax.
- ◆ **2013:** Designated as the Year of Korea in Canada.

Q: In which Canadian city will you find Canada's oldest Chinatown?

A: Victoria, BC. Chinese immigrants began arriving in 1858 with news of a gold rush.

SELECT KEY FIGURES

[Deepa Mehta](#), Indo-Canadian filmmaker.

[Rohinton Mistry](#), Indo-Canadian novelist.

[Zaib Shaikh](#), actor, writer and director of Pakistani descent.

[Michael Ondaatje](#), Sri Lankan Canadian poet, novelist, filmmaker, editor.

[Douglas Jung](#), first Chinese-Canadian elected to federal office.

[Adrienne Clarkson](#), first immigrant appointed Governor General of Canada.

[Carol Huynh](#), first Canadian woman to win Olympic gold in wrestling.

[Larry "King" Kwong](#), first player of Asian descent accepted to the National Hockey League.

[David C. Lam](#), first Asian lieutenant governor.

[David Suzuki](#), one of the world's leading environmental activists and science broadcasters.

Did you know: Asia is now the largest source of immigrants to Canada.

Watch "[Nitro](#)," the *Heritage Minute* on the building of the Canadian Pacific Railroad.